AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #215

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: "Tales of Ba Sing Se"

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THE TALE OF KATARA AND TOPH

EXT. ESTABLISHING - KIDS' APARTMENT - MORNING

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

We pan through a series of shots of the kids doing their morning rituals in front of a large mirror:

Aang shaves his head smooth (with an unusual Avatar-style shaving implement).

Sokka uses the edge of his boomerang to shave a tiny amount of "peach fuzz" from his mustache area.

Katara twists her hair loopies into place, then dabs some seaweed mousse on them for extra shine and hold.

Then from a wide shot, we see each of them responding to the results in the mirror.

Aang uses a towel to polish a final gleaming shine onto his cue ball --

AANG
Ding!

Sokka snaps his finger, points at the mirror, and winks --

SOKKA
(SMOOTH, CLICKING MOUTH SOUND)

Katara strikes an adorable flirtatious pose, and cutely bats her eyelashes at herself in the mirror.

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Toph is asleep in a messy heap on the bed, when Katara enters looking freshly groomed.

KATARA
Toph, aren't you going to get ready for the day?

Toph (who has crazy bed-head) sits up, spits in a can, and quickly brushes herself off.

TOPH
I'm ready.

KATARA
You're not going to wash up?
You've got a little dirt on your...
everywhere actually.

TOPH
You call it dirt, I call it a healthy coating of Earth.

KATARA
Hmm... you know what we need? A girls' day out!

TOPH
Do I have to?

KATARA
It'll be fun!

Toph looks a little uncertain as we...

CUT TO:

INT. SPA - DAY

Avatar's version of a day spa.

TOPH
The Fancy Lady Day Spa.
(sarcastic)
Sounds like my kind of place.

Katara is smiling uncontrollably, as several women quickly walk past with coiffed hair and make-up.

KATARA
Are you ready for some serious pampering?

TOPH
(unsure)
Sure Katara, whatever you say. As long as they don't touch my feet.

CUT TO:

INT. SPA - PEDICURE ROOM

Katara relaxes in her chair, as a spa worker gives her a pedicure, delicately putting polish on her toenails. We pan over to Toph: gritting her teeth and eyes closed, gripping her chair's arms with all her might as two pedicurists use pumice stones to smooth her rough Earthbender-style feet.

CUT TO:

INT. SPA - FACIALS AREA

Katara and Toph both have "mud masks", and star fruit over their eyes. As a spa attendant walks past, Toph bends her mud mask into a SCARY mask, bugging out the star eyes and startling the spa attendant.

CUT TO:

INT. SPA - SAUNA ROOM

In a Steam Room, Toph Earthbends heating stones onto a heating rack. Katara bends water from a nearby pail onto the stones. Steam quickly fills the room.

KATARA/TOPH
Ahhhhhhhh....

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET -LATER

Katara and Toph exit the spa feeling refreshed, and walk home. Toph, with head held high, feels and looks confident. She almost exudes femininity.

TOPH
Well that wasn't so bad. I'm not usually into that stuff, but I actually feel... girly.

KATARA
I'm glad -- it's about time we did something fun together.

They approach a rock bridge that crosses over a stream. Three MEAN GIRLS are hanging around on the bridge. They stare at Toph's newly applied make-up and hair.

MEAN GIRL #1
(sarcastically)
Wow, great makeup...

TOPH
Thanks.

MEAN GIRL #1
For a clown!

The mean girls all laugh.

KATARA
Don't listen to them, let's just keep walking.

But Toph stops.

MEAN GIRL #2
I think she looks cute -- like that time we put a sweater on your pet poodle-monkey!

They all laugh again.

MEAN GIRL #1
Good one, Star!

KATARA
Let's go Toph.

TOPH
No, no, that was a good one -- like your poodle-monkey! (LAUGHS) You know what else is a good one?

Toph stomps into a forward stance, Earthbending the rock bridge to upheave the three Mean Girls into the water below. Toph storms off upset.

KATARA
Now that was funny!

Katara quickly Waterbends a big wave of water over the girls for good measure. They are now covered in mud with their own make-up running down their face. Katara runs after Toph.

EXT. BA SING SE'S UPPER RING - LATER

Katara and Toph continue walking home. They enter a quieter, more residential neighborhood.

KATARA
Those girls don't know what they're talking about.

Toph tries to appear calm but Katara can tell that she's upset.

TOPH
It's okay. One of the good things about being blind is that I don't have to waste my time worrying about appearances. I don't care what I look like.

Tears well up in her eyes.

TOPH (cont'd)
I'm not looking for anyone's approval -- I know who I am.

KATARA
That's what I really admire about you Toph. You are so strong and confident and self-assured.

Toph nods in appreciation of what Katara is saying.

KATARA (cont'd)
And I know it doesn't matter, but... you're really pretty.

Toph doesn't quite know how to react. She can't believe what Katara said.

TOPH
I am?

KATARA
Yeah, you are.

Toph smiles at Katara.

TOPH
I'd return the compliment, but I have no idea what you look like.

KATARA
(LAUGHS)

TOPH
Thank you, Katara.

They hug. Katara smiles warmly at Toph, and Toph affectionately punches her on the shoulder a little too hard.

END OF TALE ONE

THE TALE OF UNCLE IROH

INT. BASKET SHOP - DAY

We drift through a maze of baskets, hanging like sides of ham at a market, almost all the same size, as dapples of sunlight fall on Uncle, perusing, looking at the craftsmanship.

BASKETSELLER
If this is for a romantic picnic, may I suggest this lavender one?

UNCLE
No, it's not a romantic picnic, but it is a special occasion.

Uncle grabs the first basket, and digs in his pocket for some coins. As he completes the transaction, he notices a wilting, but beautiful flower.

Uncle draws the curtain slightly, so less sun falls on the trumpet-shaped flower, and it dramatically opens up.

UNCLE (cont'd)
The moonflower likes partial shade.

The basketseller smiles and bows in appreciation. Uncle smiles and exits the shop.

EXT. BA SING SE STREET - DAY

Uncle walks down the street, then stops to admire some musical instruments. A woman next to him tries to quiet a crying child.

TODDLER
(INCONSOLABLE CRYING)

MOTHER
It's okay, shh... shh... It's okay.

The baby is dressed in a cute toy soldier uniform. The mother tries to give him a toy, but he continues to cry. Uncle notices, and frowns sympathetically. He goes to the stringed instrument vendor. The vendor nods, and Uncle takes one of the instruments. He begins to strum and sing to the crying baby, a pleasant children's song melody:

UNCLE
(singing)
Leaves from the vine, falling so slow,
like fragile tiny shells, drifting in the foam,
(MORE)

UNCLE (cont'd)
Little Soldier boy, come marching home,
Brave soldier boy, comes marching home.

Midway through the song, the child stops crying and listens intently. When Uncle finishes, the child tugs on Uncle's beard, and Uncle makes a comical face--

UNCLE (cont'd)
Yowch!

TODDLER
(GIGGLING)

Uncle salutes the tiny soldier, and goes on his way. The woman nods her appreciation.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Uncle continues on his way, past some street kids who are playing an Earthbender version of street ball. With Earthbending, the kids create ramps that causes a ball to shift and change direction, ultimately ending in the goal. The kids send up a shot that nearly hits Uncle in the head -- but he quickly ducks, and the ball flies through a window, shattering the glass. We hear a YELL from inside the window. Uncle looks to the kids.

UNCLE
It is usually best to admit mistakes when they occur, and to seek to restore honor.

A HUGE ROUND ANGRY FACE appears in the broken window.

HUGE ROUND FACE
When I'm through with you kids the window won't be the only thing that's broken!

The kids give Uncle a worried expression.

UNCLE
But not this time -- run!

The kids nod, and they all high tail it out of there.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Uncle runs into an alley, where he runs right into a ...

MUGGER
You. Give me all your money.

The mugger stands, clutching a knife, but with a poor Kung Fu stance.

UNCLE
What are you doing?

MUGGER
I'm mugging you.

UNCLE
With that stance?

The mugger looks down at his legs.

MUGGER
What? What are you talking about? Just give me your money, old man!

UNCLE
With a poor stance, you are unbalanced, and can be easily knocked over.

Uncle swiftly taps the mugger in the chest, and he promptly falls down.

UNCLE (cont'd)
With a solid stance, you are a much more serious threat.

Uncle demonstrates, and the mugger mimics a good stance.

UNCLE (cont'd)
Much better. But to tell you the truth, you do not look like the criminal type.

MUGGER
I know... I'm just confused.

The mugger hangs his head.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

The mugger and Uncle are sitting on the sidewalk, sharing a cup of tea.

MUGGER
So you really think I could be a good masseuse?

UNCLE
Of course.

MUGGER
This is so great. No one has ever believed in me.

UNCLE
While it is always best to believe in oneself, a little help from others can be a great blessing.

EXT. WALL - DAY

Uncle walks with his picnic basket towards a hill, overlooking the walls of Ba Sing Se. He finds a beautiful scenic spot, where he places down a blanket, and erects a little shrine. He places offerings of rice and fruit, and lights a candle and some incense.

UNCLE
Happy birthday, my son. If only I could have helped you...

He glances down at the picture on the shrine, and we can see that it is Uncle's son, Lu Ten. He sings the song we heard before, but this time a capella, and with a sad, slightly haunting quality. Tears well up as he sings.

UNCLE (cont'd)
(singing softly)
Leaves from the vine, falling so slow,
like fragile tiny shells, drifting in the foam,
Little Soldier boy, come marching home,
Brave soldier boy, comes marching home.

The tears stream down his face.

END OF TALE TWO

THE TALE OF AANG

EXT. BA SING SE ZOO - ESTABLISHING

Even in the establishing shot it is clear that the zoo is in bad shape. Possibly we see a dilapidated sign (pictures of animals and Chinese characters).

EXT. BA SING SE ZOO - DAY

It looks like no one has come to visit for years and the animals look unhappy. Aang walks by an aviary filled with dragonflies -- tiny dragons with butterfly wings. The animals buzz about miserably in their cramped quarters. Aang SIGHS and turns his gaze to a platypus bear in a cage that's too small, then to a tigerdillo who looks like it hasn't eaten in a long time.

AANG
Hey there, fella. You look hungry--

As he starts to reach out to the animal, it suddenly releases a furious tiger's ROAR.

AANG (cont'd)
(STARTLED YELP)

The tigerdillo is also startled by Aang's screaming, and it quickly curls up into a ball, armadillo style.

VOICE (O.S.)
They are hungry.

Aang is approached by KENJI -- a kind but somewhat lazy zookeeper (this is NOT a comment on Kenji Ono's work ethic).

KENJI
The Dai Li won't give me any money because the kids stopped coming. And the kids won't come because my zoo's nasty and broke.

As they walk and talk, they come to the cage of a sad RABIROO -- a rabbit, kangaroo hybrid -- who just cowers in the corner.

AANG
What kind of animal is that?

KENJI
Ooh, that's a rabbiroo. I wish I could get her a big open prairie like she likes, and let her hop her way to happiness.

Aang gets an idea.

AANG
Let's do it.

KENJI
Say again?

AANG
There's a big open space right outside the walls of the city!

KENJI
But how are you gonna transport all these wild critters?

AANG
(smiling)
Don't worry, I'm great with animals.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BA SING SE LOWER RING - DAY

Animals are running around everywhere. Hog monkeys trash a woman's kitchen, a tigerdillo rolls into a ball and smashes through someone's wall, and the rabbiroo munches on cabbages from the CABBAGE MERCHANT'S cart.

CABBAGE MERCHANT
My cabba-- ah, forget it.

It is absolute bedlam and the citizens are terrified. Aang is doing all he can to try and contain the chaos. He's sending air blasts to ward off dragonflies while Kenji is using Earthbending to corral some unruly baboonephants.

AANG
This was so much easier in my head!

Aang's face lights up and he pulls out his bison whistle.

Using his staff, Aang creates a giant Airbending burst and sends it through the whistle. Instantly the hog monkeys leave the kitchen, the tigerdillo leaves the house it's destroying, and the rabbiroo stops eating and turns toward the sound. All the animals in the lower ring of Ba Sing Se -- including peoples' pets -- start to follow Aang's whistle. He hears the STAMPEDE of their footsteps. Aang whips up an air scooter and heads for the gate, still blowing his whistle.

EXT. BA SING SE GATE - DAY

Kenji is desperately trying to convince a GUARD to open the gate, with little effect.

KENJI
But you have to open this gate!

GUARD
Or what?

KENJI
(pointing)
Or that!

GUARD
Open the gate!

There is a massive rumbling and we swoosh pan to a wide shot to see Aang barreling down the street with all the animals behind him. He frantically blows his whistle with large Airbending blasts, resembling the pied piper. The guard's eyes pop open and he signals with a panic to have the gate opened. The Earthbenders on duty begin to create an opening with their bending. They're going as fast as they can, but have only managed to bend a small opening in the wall as the stampede of animals continues its charge. Aang barely turns out of the way as all the animals CRASH through the small opening in the wall, taking pieces of the fortification with them.

EXT. BA SING SE INNER WALL - DAY

Aang and Kenji stand on the wall and work their Earthbending together in tandem, using it to form a massive animal sanctuary with habitats for all the different species.

Once they finish, Aang and Kenji look out at the sanctuary which is now a beautiful vista and all the animals are happy. Aang watches the rabbiroo hop away, but before she gets too far, she turns around as if to say good-bye. One by one, three little baby rabbiroo heads pop out of her pouch. Aang beams with pride.

AANG
Well, Mr. Zookeeper... how do you like your new facilities?

KENJI
Excellent job, Avatar. You should think about working with animals for a living.

Kenji is surrounded by several curious children.

KID #1
Mommy, Miss Snowflake got out of the house again.

The kid points to a small habitat with a number of ordinary house pets wearing collars. Another kid reacts.

KID #2
Fluffykins? What are you doing down there?

Kenji turns to Aang, who is now embarrassed.

KENJI
On second thought, you should probably stick to saving people.

AANG
(CHUCKLES NERVOUSLY)

END OF TALE THREE

THE TALE OF SOKKA

EXT. SIDE STREET OF BA SING SE - EARLY EVENING *

Sokka heads down a side street. A loaded produce wagon waits nearby as a stablehand leads a balky ostrich horse up to be harnessed.

As Sokka passes between the ostrich horse and a small square window set into the side of the building, he's distracted by the voices inside.

YOUNG LADIES (O.S.)
(MURMURING AND CLAPPING)

SOKKA
What's this?

He looks around, then bends over to peer through the carved wooden screen into:

INT. HALL - BA SING SE YOUNG LADIES HAIKU SOCIETY - CONTINUOUS

A small group of refined and pretty young ladies of about Sokka's age sit primly on cushions in front of a low stage. On stage, right next to the window that Sokka is looking through, one elegant young lady opens and reads from a little scroll.

ELEGANT YOUNG LADY
Through all the long night/
Winter moon glows with bright love/
Sleet her silver tears.

YOUNG LADIES
(romantic sighs)
Ahh/ooh/aaah...

EXT. SIDE STREET - CONTINUOUS

SOKKA
(sighing most romantically of all)
Aaahhhh... POETRY.

Sokka has chin in hand as he watches through the window, leaning over with his butt sticking out. Both the poem and the young ladies remind him of Princess Yue. He's so distracted, in fact, he doesn't notice the ostrich horse behind him is acting up... A single, well-placed KICK sends Sokka right into the window.

INT. HALL - BA SING SE YOUNG LADIES HAIKU SOCIETY - CONTINUOUS

YOUNG LADIES
(ALARMED SHRIEKS)

Sokka's head and shoulders are sticking through the window, half in/half out. He's stuck, the entire demure gathering is looking at him with alarm, it's all highly embarrassing. He tries to retreat, but it's no use -- forward is his only option. As he is wriggling out of the window onto the stage, and finally clambers to his feet (all with maximum Sokka-style bumbling), he stammers out an apology.

SOKKA
I am so...

He starts to yank himself out of the window.

SOKKA (cont'd)
...sorry. (GRUNTS) Something struck me in the rear. I just wound up...

He removes the screen from around his neck and trails off. The girls all look at him silently, with blank expectant faces.

SOKKA CONT'D
...here?

YOUNG LADIES
(SMILING AND CLAPPING, A FEW GIGGLES)

Sokka has accidentally made a haiku. The teacher of the group, a rather severe older woman named MADAME MACMU-LING, rises to her feet and explains, still clapping.

MADAME MACMU-LING
(to class)
Five, seven, then five/
Syllables mark a
(bows slightly to Sokka)
haiku/
Remarkable oaf!

Sokka, not liking her condescending tone but enjoying the girls' attention, tries another haiku.

SOKKA
They call me Sokka/
That is, in the Water Tribe/
(MORE)

SOKKA (cont'd)
I...am...not...an...
(counting on fingers)
...oaf!

YOUNG LADIES
(GIGGLING AND TITTERING BEHIND HANDS)

MADAME MACMU-LING
(pleasantly)
Chittering monkey/
In the spring he climbs treetops/
(narrowing eyes)
And thinks himself tall.

YOUNG LADIES
("she got him")
Ooooh...

SOKKA
(casual)
You think you're so smart/
With your fancy little words/
This is not so hard. *

YOUNG LADIES
(bigger than before)
Oooooh!

MADAME MACMU-LING
(angrily)
Whole seasons are spent/
Mastering the form, the style/
None calls it easy!

She takes the stage as well. A "haiku slam" contest begins, with the young ladies reacting to each haiku. Their teacher has impeccable form, but the ever-cockier Sokka makes them laugh louder and louder...

SOKKA
I calls it easy/
Like I paddle my canoe/
I'll paddle yours too! *

Sokka spanks himself on the bottom.

YOUNG LADIES
(LOUD LAUGHTER)

MADAME MACMU-LING
There's nuts, and there's fruits/
In fall, the clinging plum drops/
(MORE)

MADAME MACMU-LING (cont'd)
(takes plum out of sleeve and drops it)
Always to be squashed.

She squashes the plum with her foot.

SOKKA
Squish-squash, sling that slang/
I'm always right back at ya/
Like my... boomerang.

He produces his boomerang with a flourish.

YOUNG LADIES
(LOUD LAUGHING AND CHEERING)

The exasperated teacher gives up and sits back down. All of this attention has gone straight to Sokka's head, and he hams it up with a victory haiku, posturing while not even looking at his audience.

SOKKA
That's right I'm Sokka/
It's pronounced with an 'okka'/
Young ladies, I ROCKED YA!

With a big finish, Sokka looks to the girls. They are stony-faced, silent. Hostile. Just as he starts counting fearfully on his fingers, a big thug steps out of the shadows and grabs him.

POETRY BOUNCER
Eh, that's one too many syllables there, bub.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - EARLY EVENING

Sokka is thrown through the hall doors into the street, landing hard on his butt. The bouncer, as is traditional, dusts his hands off and slams the main door to the hall shut.

SOKKA
Owwww!
(then, grumpily, chin in hand)
...POETRY.

END OF TALE FOUR

THE TALE OF ZUKO

INT. BA SING SE TEA HOUSE - DAY

Zuko and Uncle are working at the tea shop. Zuko storms into the kitchen.

ZUKO
(whispering)
Uncle, we have a problem. One of the customers is on to us. Don't look now, but there is a girl over there at the corner table. She knows we're Fire Nation.

Uncle peeks around to look where the girl sits, drinking tea. The girl, JIN, bats her eyelashes and stares at Zuko.

ZUKO (cont'd)
Didn't I say don't look?

UNCLE
You're right Zuko, I've seen that girl in here quite a lot. Seems to me she has quite a little crush on you.

ZUKO
What?!

Jin comes up to pay, still staring at Zuko.

JIN
Thank you for the tea. What's your name?

Zuko looks uncomfortable. Uncle has a slight grin on his face as he busies himself, eavesdropping. Zuko gives Jin her change.

ZUKO
My name's Lee. My Uncle and I just moved here.

JIN
Hi, Lee, my name's Jin. Thank you, and... well, I was wondering if you would like to go out sometime.

Zuko looks totally overwhelmed. Before he can answer, Uncle cuts in.

UNCLE
He'd love to.

JIN
Great. I'll meet you in front of the shop at sundown.

As she leaves, Zuko turns and looks furiously at Uncle. Uncle grins.

EXT. BA SING SE TEA HOUSE - LATER

Zuko exits the Tea House. His hair is slicked and parted down the middle and he has different clothes. He looks extremely awkward and uncomfortable. Jin comes up from behind Zuko and surprises him.

JIN
Hey, well, look at you. You look so cute!

She playfully messes up his hair.

ZUKO
It took my uncle ten minutes to do my hair...

INT. BA SING SE RESTAURANT - LATER

Zuko and Jin eat at a casual restaurant where the local Ba Sing Se teens hang out. Zuko glances around the restaurant uncomfortably, avoiding direct eye contact with Jin.

JIN
So, how do you like the city so far?

ZUKO
It's okay.

JIN
What do you like to do for fun?

ZUKO
Nothing.

It's obvious that Zuko doesn't know how to behave on the date. As he looks nervously around, the WAITER approaches the table.

WAITER
Excuse me sir, would you and your girlfriend care for dessert?

Zuko instantly turns angry.

ZUKO
(yelling)
She is not my girlfriend!

The whole restaurant goes quiet. Everyone stares at Jin and Zuko's table. The waiter looks at Jin and rolls his eyes, then walks away. Zuko sees that Jin looks a little hurt so he struggles to find something nice to say to make up for it.

ZUKO (cont'd)
You have quite an appetite for a girl.

JIN
Um, thanks.

They sit in awkward silence for a moment. Jin tries again to break the ice.

JIN (cont'd)
So Lee, where were you and your uncle living before you came here?

ZUKO
Um, well, we've been traveling around for a long time.

Jin looks intrigued.

JIN
Oh -- why were you traveling so much?

ZUKO
We were, ah... part of this traveling circus.

Jin gets really excited.

JIN
Really? What did you do? Wait. Let me guess -- you juggled.

ZUKO
(unenthusiastically)
Yes. I juggled.

JIN
I've always wanted to learn how to juggle. Can you show me something?

Before Zuko can answer, Jin grabs three random objects (fruit, pastries, etc.) and hands them to Zuko. Zuko tries to juggle, but he can't, and the food falls on his head.

ZUKO
I haven't practiced for a while.

Jin sees his embarrassment and gives him a sympathetic smile.

JIN
It's all right. Hey, I want to show you one of my favorite places in the city.

EXT. BA SING SE FOUNTAIN - LATER

Jin leads Zuko towards a magnificent fountain, which sits on top of a hill overlooking the city. Zuko seems a bit more comfortable now that they are outside and alone.

JIN
I'm so excited for you to see the Firelight fountain. The lamps make the water sparkle, and reflect in the pool in the most beautiful way.

As Zuko and Jin approach the fountain, a look of disappointment falls upon Jin's face. The lamps that light up the fountain are not burning.

JIN (cont'd)
I can't believe it! They aren't lit.

Jin touches Zuko's arm. He can tell how disappointed she is, and for the first time all night he knows what he needs to do.

ZUKO
Close your eyes -- and don't peek.

Jin covers her eyes but playfully peeks through her fingers.

She covers her eyes. Zuko quickly surveys the area to make sure that no one is around. Then he does a simple Firebending move and makes a sweeping motion. The lamps ignite sequentially like dominoes, creating the magical image Jin expected.

ZUKO (cont'd)
Okay, now you can look.

She opens her eyes and takes in the beautiful scene.

JIN
Oh, wow! What happened? How did they light? What did you...?

Zuko smiles at her excitement, but doesn't answer. They both take a moment to enjoy the view. Jin turns to look at Zuko, watching him relax. He feels her stare and turns to face her. They share a romantic moment, the lamplight flickering all around them, dancing on their faces. It seems as though Zuko and Jin are about to kiss -- but Zuko abruptly interrupts the moment.

ZUKO
I brought you something.

Zuko reaches in his pocket, pulls out a piece of paper, and hands it to Jin.

ZUKO (cont'd)
It's a coupon for a free cup of tea.

Jin looks down at the coupon.

JIN
Lee, this is so sweet.

ZUKO
Don't thank me. It was my Uncle's idea. He thinks you are our most valuable customer.

JIN
Your uncle is a good teacher.

Jin pauses.

JIN (cont'd)
I have something for you, too. Now it's your turn to close your eyes.

Jin waits for Zuko to close his eyes. She slowly leans in toward him and gently kisses him. Zuko is a bit shocked and quickly pulls away.

JIN (cont'd)
What's wrong?

He sees Jin's upset reaction and softens a bit.

ZUKO
It's complicated.
(beat)
I have to go.

Before Jin can respond, Zuko takes off.

INT. ZUKO AND UNCLE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Uncle looks out the window anxiously awaiting Zuko's arrival. As Zuko enters, Uncle tries to look nonchalantly busy.

UNCLE
How was your night, Prince Zuko?

Zuko storms past Uncle, heads into his bedroom, and SLAMS the door. After a few moments, Zuko's door opens and Zuko peeks his head out.

ZUKO
It was nice.

Zuko closes the door gently this time. Uncle smiles.

END OF TALE FIVE

THE TALE OF MOMO

EXT. TREE ABOVE THE CLOUDS - DREAM - SUNSET

There is a beautiful giant tree with a plethora of fruit high above the clouds, and Appa and Momo fly up from below to the branches. Momo jumps from fruit to fruit excited, tossing various delicious fruits to Appa as he catches them in his mouth and chews.

MOMO
(CUTE CHIRRUPS)

But when Appa looks over and opens his mouth to respond...

APPA
(SOUND OF THUNDER)

CUT TO:

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Momo, lying on a windowsill, wakes up abruptly. He's a little shaken by the noise, and as he goes to lay his head back down, another THUNDERCLAP scares him into Sokka's bag. After a beat, Momo comes back out of it holding a long piece of Appa's hair -- he smells it, triggering a quick FLASHBACK SHOT of Appa. Momo misses his buddy. Suddenly, Momo sees something outside -- a giant shadow flies by! Thinking it could be Appa, Momo wraps the hair around his wrist and flies out after the shadow.

EXT. CITY STREETS - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CLOUDY DAY

Momo flies around a few buildings through the city, chasing the shadow -- but finally looks up to realize these shadows are from storm clouds, moving quickly in the wind. Momo is alone and sad.

He lands on a porch overhang, and sees what appears to be the top of Appa's head and body beyond a roofline in the distance -- his eyes widen with excitement! He flies over to investigate, but when he gets there he sees that it is just a tree covered in Appa-colored blossoms, with branches similar to Appa's horns.

Momo really misses his buddy more than ever. He glides down into an alleyway between some shops, and unfortunately interrupts three PYGMY PUMAS (think cat-sized, extremely muscular panthers) eating their dinner of garbage and fish bones. They slowly start to approach our hero.

PYGMY PUMA
(VICIOUS THREATENING GROWL)

Momo back-pedals and then runs the other direction, but the cats are extremely fast and quickly catch up. Momo ducks under a food cart, and then tries to fly away, but the cats start jumping off the walls, practically flying in the air (think Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon) and pounce on Momo, preventing him from getting away.

The chase continues over the tops of some merchant awnings, as Momo tries desperately to ditch the cats, but then falls through one of the overhangs and lands in the middle of a street performance.

The absent-minded ORGAN GRINDER sees Momo and mistakes him for one of his monkeys. He slaps a silly performance hat on the lemur, and shoves him in front of the crowd. Momo finds himself flanked by two dancing monkeys (or similar type animals) who wear the same hat as Momo. They begin performing for the crowd while Momo confusedly stands in the middle, wide-eyed with his hat on crooked. The pygmy pumas stealthily pace between the legs of the crowd, eyeballing Momo with intense stares. Momo bolts! And the tiny pumas follow...

Momo lands several feet outside the circle of spectators, quickly re-orients himself and attempts to fly away, but the pygmy pumas leap out from various directions to pounce on him. One grapples Momo around the waist, weighing him down and slowing his escape. Another leaps up and holds onto the first cat, now dragging Momo down to just a few feet above the ground. The last puma wraps up Momo's arms and wings, causing the four of them to crash to the ground.

Momo is surrounded now -- there is no escape. The pumas close in. Suddenly, a huge net (more like a fisherman's net, or the pirate's net from 109 than a giant butterfly catcher) swoops down and captures all four distracted animals.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - ANIMAL CONTROL CART

A caged Momo watches as an ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER puts the three pygmy pumas into a separate cage, and closes the locking mechanism. As Momo watches, we cut to a detail of the lock, a brass emblem that when open resembles a bird, but when locked resembles a dragon. We see the officer perform the simple maneuvers to put it in the locked position. (This can be as simple as three segments that twist clockwise or counterclockwise -- see Giancarlo.) The pygmy pumas still glare angrily at Momo. Momo strokes the Appa hair wrapped around his wrist.

MOMO
(SAD CHIRRUPS)

The four of them are taken away in a cart pulled by an ostrich horse.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ANIMAL SLAUGHTER HOUSE - LATER - CLOUDS REALLY START FORMING

The Animal Control Officer talks to a BUTCHER, who wears a filthy apron and holds a huge Chinese cutting knife. They stand in the doorway of a run down building in a dark alleyway.

CUT TO:

MOMO'S P.O.V.

The two men look back and forth from each other to the animals. Their speech is low and undecipherable (chattering like Katara and Sokka in Momo's POV of 1.13). They laugh as the Butcher counts out coins from a sack and places them in the Control Officer's palm.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF ANIMAL SLAUGHTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The pumas start batting and swatting at the lock mechanism of their cage, but make no progress (their paws are too animal-like, unlike Momo's). Momo, though, deftly and nimbly reaches around to the outside of his cage and unlocks it -- reversing the simple maneuvers used to lock it, quickly switching the lock's dragon shape back to a bird. Momo swings the door open and escapes!

He begins to fly away, but hesitates as he hears the pygmy pumas behind him...

PUMAS
(SAD BEGGING/WHINING/CRYING SOUNDS)

Momo stops to look back at the pumas, all of whom appear helpless and desperate now. In an act of mercy and compassion, Momo runs over and undoes the locking mechanism on their cage, releasing them. They all escape just before the Butcher enters with scary butchering tools.

EXT. CITY STREETS - ROOF TOP - LATE CLOUDY DAY

Momo and the pumas stop running on the roof of a building, far above the ground and other humans. One of the pumas nuzzles up to Momo in gratitude.

PUMA
(PURRING)

Just then, the cat grabs the Appa-fur on Momo's wrist in its mouth, and runs off! Momo freaks out and chases after him.

EXT. PARK AREA - LATER

The puma leads Momo to a patch of land covered with weeds. (Note that wherever this area ends up being, it should hook up with episode 2.16). The puma drops the hair and backs away. Momo looks around and sees other patches of Appa's fur caught in some of the surrounding weeds. Momo suddenly appears very sad and curls up on the ground. The camera pulls back to reveal Momo is laying in a giant paw print left by Appa!

It's a very emotional moment, as dark clouds continue to swirl. THUNDER again, and rain begins to fall and wash away Appa's paw print, with Momo sadly curled up inside it.

END OF TALE SIX